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Mayor and Council join Franklinton residents for double demolition and to tour newly-rehabbed Home Again properties in Franklinton

(Columbus) Franklinton resident Carol Stewart lived beside two blighted properties for years, but today something changed. Carol stood with Mayor Michael B. Coleman and Councilmembers Charleta B. Tavares and Hearchel F. Craig as the City began tearing down the houses through the City's Home Again program.

"Carol Stewart, her neighbors and families all over Columbus deserve better than to live beside these blighted, abandoned houses," said Mayor Coleman. "We're beginning to make a difference – house by house on this street and throughout the community with the Home Again program. We're using every power we have under the law to take down blights, hold private owners accountable and turn abandoned properties into new homes for families."

The demolitions of 180 and 192 Princeton Avenue kicked off a morning tour of Home Again activity in Franklinton for residents and housing advocates that included a visit to newly rehabbed homes on Martin Avenue. Last June, Mayor Coleman kicked off a \$25 million Home Again initiative as a five-part strategy to fix up or tear down and replace 1,000 of the estimated 4,475 vacant properties citywide.

"The Franklinton Community is very pleased with the lovely appearance of these Home Again sites on Martin Avenue, and are very happy that so many have already been sold or are in contract to people who want to live in Franklinton. We look forward to the first new Home Again home to be built on South Princeton Avenue," said Carol Stewart, a Franklinton resident and Area Commissioner.

Since June 2006, Code Enforcement and Building Inspectors have referred nearly 500 cases of blighted and neglected properties to City Attorney Richard C. Pfeiffer's Office.

"Since the Mayor announced Home Again last year, the City Attorney's office has opened 280 cases dealing specifically with the worst vacant and abandoned houses in the City," said City Attorney Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr. "We have worked aggressively through the court system, with the support

of Council and the Mayor, to hold the owners of these properties that drag down our neighborhoods accountable. We, and more importantly, the neighbors of these houses are starting to see real results with owners rehabbing properties because they realize they must take care of the properties they own in the City of Columbus."

The Mayor and residents also toured 154 Martin Avenue, a former drug house, which was rehabilitated over the past year as part of Home Again's partnership with the Columbus Franklin County Affordable Housing Trust (CFCaHT), Greater Columbus Habitat for Humanity and Columbus Housing Partnership plan. The partners also fixed up 158-160, 115, 133, 147 Martin Avenue, and are currently selling the properties.

In 2007, the Home Again program plans to:

- Acquire and rehab 25 properties (14 properties now underway)
- ACA rehabs: 60 (starting with City contract with CHP for \$750,000 to rehab 23 properties across the City)
- Build 4 new houses on lots with Habitat for Humanity
- Build new houses on 15 city-owned lots
- Help 115 residents stay in their homes with emergency roof repairs (20 already completed and 14 currently under construction)
- Help demolish 60 vacant and blighted properties

"The Home Again program is not just rebuilding neighborhoods, the program is rebuilding lives," said Health, Housing & Human Services Committee Chair Charleta B. Tavares. "Removing a problem home from a neighborhood not only makes the area safer, it also restores the esteem of the residents who live near the cleaned-up property."

In 2006, Home Again was responsible for initiating 105 roof repair cases; 96 completed at a cost of \$1,355,833. The City demolished 27 properties at a cost of \$117,112 and another 52 were demolished by private owners.